48. (Amended) Device according to claim 28, further comprising means for regulating and/or controlling the flowrate of the wort entering the column and means for regulating and/or controlling the flowrate of the current of inert gas or steam into the column.

C1

50. (Twice Amended) Device according to claim [49] 48, wherein the regulation and/or control means comprise solenoid valves and/or pneumatic valves.

C2

Sub D5>

56. (Amended) Device according to claim 28, wherein said filler bodies are piled up directly above said bottom plate in the volume between said bottom plate and said distribution plate [, said volume being free from any rack].

C3

Add the following new claims:

Sub D6>

--63. A method of eliminating unwanted volatile components from a beer wort in a column by counter current contact between a descending current of heated wort and an ascending current of heated steam or inert gas at a predetermined internal pressure in said column, comprising:

C4

sub D6> heating said wort at a temperature substantially equal to the boiling point of said wort at said internal pressure;

separating unwanted volatile components from said wort, said separating step comprising providing a column having a distribution plate at the level of a top part of said column and a bottom plate at the level of a bottom part of said column, which bottom plate has orifices providing a free surface area of at least 90% of the cross sectional area of the column;

C4

providing said distribution plate with a plurality of orifices in said distribution plate for uniform flow of said wort in said column, and providing a plurality of chimneys on a top surface of said distribution plate for uniform flow of steam or inert gas in said column;

said separating step further comprising introducing said heated wort into said column above said distribution plate;

sub D6

passing said wort through said orifices in said distribution plate in a descending direction and at a flow rate which allows a volume of wort to build up on said top surface of said distribution plate, while allowing said steam or inert gas to separately ascend through said chimneys of said distribution plate so as to reduce contact between the wort and the inert gas or steam, and while avoiding any significant formation of foam at the level of the top part of the column;

C4

creating an ascending current of said inert gas or steam at a temperature substantially equal to that of said heated wort inside the column beneath said bottom plate; and

placing said descending wort flow in contact with said ascending current of said inert gas or steam so as to eliminate said unwanted volatile compounds by flowing said wort through filler bodies directly supported by said bottom plate while avoiding any significant formation of foam at the level of said bottom part of said column and at the level of said filler bodies.